REWRITE The Magazine of Effective Writing

Vol. XV No. 1. MARCH, 1955. Fifty cents

YOU WRITE OUT OF WHAT YOU ARE

The other day Elva was about to start the day by counselling the author of some poems that resembled the e. e. cummings type. The day before, I had been cleaning out a piled up clutter of papers and had run across the published pronouncements on how to be a successful writer made by several members of a writers' conference staff. So it was inevitable a discussion of the relation between writing and personality developed.

Elva, a mild mannered and gentle critic if there ever was one, started the ball rolling by questioning the sincerity of the writers who seem to try to be deliberately obscure. Neither she nor I doubt the ever-present effort required not to be obscure, to be just the opposite: crystal clear. That is a problem that eternally faces all of us, even the very best of professionals. Geniuses have to wrestle with it, too.

Elva's point is that some writers seem to believe there is some kind of virtue in being difficult to read; i. e., in creating a set of secret symbols, or a private sort of language. I said that in my work with short story writers, I constantly remind them that it is smart to do all of the reader's homework for him that one can. It makes a story more pleasurable, if the words are "easy to read". Then the reader can participate more fully in the story and its ideas. He can devote more of his energy to the implications and inner meaning of the story. To its overtones, in a word.

Elva countered by pointing out that often a writer achieves obscurity unintentionally because he employs thoughts, ideas and references to mythology, history or scientific backgrounds of one kind or another that are not possessed by the ordinary reader. Then the reader has to resort to a dictionary or encyclopaedia. Most readers today refuse to take this amount of trouble. Being one that likes the long view on human living, I said that a writer can write with an eye oriented on wide horizons, and still not be "dry" or obscure. Nearly all of the great professors have been exciting teachers because of their simplicity, their ability to bring immortal truths down to the level of the common man.

At this point let me emphasize the lesson I have learned in teaching and writing that even with great care it is very easy to mix one's analogies and metaphors. A good writer learns the trick of making visual all of his points, so that the reader can actually "see" in his mind's eye intangible ideas as if they had been drawn graphically in a picture form. Jesus always did this, translating his philosophy into parables that everyone could understand. He visualized clearly.

Continuing, we realized that while the giants might seem to adopt strange new technical tricks, obscure symbols, if one analyzes them carefully, or looks back on their work, they are really simple and easy to follow. I pointed out that even the relatively untutored listener can get some pleasure out of a Beethoven symphony. Elva, who is reading the collected poems of e. e. cummings, commented that in spite of his reputation, he uses words and sustained ideas far more than his scoffers would have you believe. We decided that frequently real obscurity is achieved, not by the great innovators, but by the disciples who come after them, who ape them, & borrow only the novelties and not the technical skills or mature outlooks.

That brought us back to the inner motivations that prompt writers to write. Sincerity or lack of it imparted by their writing and their personalities. We agreed that quite a few writers, like some teachers, fail to put over their ideas, and to be effective, simply because they expect the reader to "come" to them. They are honestly trying to give out. But they lack the temperamental resiliency, which enables them to speak the language of their readers. It is as if they announce at the beginning of their "class" that it will be conducted throughout in French, when the students can only understand English.

This is very different from the other sort of writer who more or less deliberately cultivates the snob approach. These desire only to be read by literary or the dilettantes of their own private circle. Or they write for the primary purpose of inflating their egos, to be noticed by attracting attention. Notoriety instead of fame. Sometimes this motivation stems from a sense of frustration, of insecurity and fear. Then they are surely to be pitied rather than detested.

In any case, they write to receive rather than to give. The true writer, be he ever so humble, writes out of his enthusiasms & his excitement over discovering things about his world and the strange, curious, but interesting, alive people he meets. He feels that in his small way he is in tune with the "infinite". He is filled with joy and reverence. He marvels and wishes to share, to pour out as fast as he soaks up and receives.

That returns us to the pronouncements the writers' staff members made. Most of these were wrong because they were startling, off-the-top statements, made without thought or deep feeling and uttered only for publicity. The majority of these folk were not "giving out" from their store of wisdom and experience. Reading this article, I contrasted in my mind a set of similar assertions I gathered in reference to a statement made by Edison on Happiness when he was eighty. All of my interviewees (all over 80) paused & gave the matter some thought. They were "givers".

"As you are, so will you write!" Take heed!

Published quarterly by
Writers' Counsel Service, 50 West Street,
Lunenburg, Mass.

SEE AND WRITE THE TRUTH — William E. Harris, Elva Ray Harris, Editors. — KEEP AMERICA FREE

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 50¢ per copy, $2.00 per year anywhere in the world. Copyright, February, 1955. Reproduction without the permission of, or credit to the editors is forbidden.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: to insure continuous receipt of your copies, send us any change at least ONE MONTH in advance. Please give exact change, with old & new addresses. Magazines are not forwarded now. Therefore, when you do not advise us or arrange for forwarding, we are taxed additional postage for return and re-mailing of each copy.

PROMPT RENEWALS: help us to give you a better magazine. Many subscribers renew for two years or more. Saves Time and Money.

URGE YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE. Because we accept no advertising as a matter of policy, in order to report the entire field of writing & selling objectively, we depend entirely on our readers for support. REWRITE is a writer's magazine. It is your friend. Use it, recommend it. Duplicate subscriptions mailed to the same address cost only $1.00.

THINK WHEN YOU PAY YOUR TAXES

At this time of the year it is profitable for everyone to do some hard thinking about the cost of Government. The real cost is far more than the dollars and cents cost of paying taxes. You must add in the luxury of national, state, county and town governments, that are inefficient, overlapping, wasteful. That are unable to conduct their affairs on a balanced budget or pay-as-you-go basis. In too many cases they provide too many "jobs" that are a sinecure, or for which the price is loss of personal integrity in an exchange for ill-fitting security at taxpayer expense.

We all know that no country can do entirely without government. Government fulfills a great many useful functions. But it is well to remember that our ancestors fled from an amazing variety of nations to avoid persecution of Church and State that grew out of a set-up very similar to the one we are today permitting to feed upon the fat of our land. It is said that in Europe and Asia many nations are still suffering from the devitalizing effects of a feudal or class society. I wonder, however, if in spite of our claim to a democracy, whether we are not fast mortgaging our future to the same sort of feudal yoke. We have only substituted sprawling government and a tax collector for the kept lords and ladies, landlord and his rent collector demanding their feudal fief.

Others with better minds for these things than I, have spoken out more harshly and intolerantly. "The power to tax, is the power to destroy." William Butler Yeats once wrote a letter to the English writer, Ethel Mannin: "...As my sense of reality deepens, and I think it does with age, my horror at the cruelty of governments grows greater, and if I did what you want, I would seem to hold one form of government more responsible than any other, and that would betray my convictions.

"Communist, Fascist, nationalist, clerical, anti-clerical, are all responsible according to the number of their victims," he wrote, as he did an earlier letter, in the spring of 1936. In that earlier letter he disarmed an angry opponent of this later day, who might consider him "subversive"! For he said something writers should forever remember. "Do not let it (propaganda) come too much into your life. I have lived in the midst of it, I have always been a propagandist, though I have kept it out of my poems. It will embitter your soul with hatred as it has mine."

And that, it seems to me, is what too much government is threatening to do to us. We have been living too many years in a deficit-ridden world where governments have stirred up hatreds, destruction, disease, insecurity and the threat of new wars. The good that our government has done throughout the world, has been considerably offset by warmongering and waste and confusion through contradictory policies at home and abroad.

Much is said in screaming headlines about our rising juvenile delinquency. You cannot brutalize men with war techniques, & expect them to behave like little gentlemen. You cannot raise the cost of living to such levels that thousands of men must fill two jobs and their wives take another, and expect the home to continue to exert its benign influence on growing boys and girls. We may have the highest standard of living in the world, but we have lost some of our flare for living life to the full and enjoying ourselves in a relaxed and happy manner.

Business, big business which cracks a whip of desire for all the machines it builds to cost more and give less, to wear out and be traded in every few years, may not escape a parallel condemnation. Its economists maintain a ceaseless barrage that this is truly the best of all possible worlds, and it can be lived in happily under a cloud-cap of personal and governmental debt. A good many of our more thoughtful readers and writers are beginning to wonder if the moral evasions & physical tensions building up in a world in which governments dominate or have some part to play in our every waking moment, are not a heavy price to pay for our worldly treasures and material possessions.

What this country needs is not a good five cent cigar (that day is gone forever!), but rather a less expensive, less jumbled government, and much, much less of it!

HOW IS YOUR LINE OF INTEREST?

Probably the single most important factor in any kind of writing is to have a strong, forward-moving line of interest drawing the reader steadily toward the climax, and then the ending or conclusion. Somerset Maugham has said this. And recently in reading what writers and friends have said about Margaret Mitchell in the little brochure published by the Atlanta Public Library, I noticed that she repeatedly said: "The point is the story you have to tell. You can tell a story if you have one to tell."

Now a line of interest can be many things and each of these may be different for different readers. It is what happens for some readers; it is the challenge of the ideas or the emotional content of the theme for other folk. It may even be the philosophy that an author propounds and develops. Or the style that Margaret Mitchell had no use for. But there is something, and sometimes the sum of many things, that draws the reader eternally and irresistible forward.

In my class at Clark University the other evening I told the students about the technique of weaving several elements together, to make a strong line of interest. We found that what perhaps distinguishes for readers the difference between a strong and a weaker line of interest is the ability of writers to put hooks into their lines; to visualize in a sense for the reader a definite, never-failing line that at any point in the story, article or poem, etc., seems to have a barbed arrow of promise pointing forward.

Therefore, probably the first necessity is to conceive some kind of a line that is unbroken from start to finish. No matter if it is ragged or seemingly unimportant, if it's sustained, we have something. It at least is a connecting link uniting the start with the finish. And at this point let me add that I believe very few narrative lines of interest just happen, or lie waiting for the writer to make use of them. Nine out of ten have to be built.

Therein lies the craftsmanship. Some writers will turn over and turn up their toes in discouragement. "How can I compete with the professionals," they will wail. But isn't it encouraging that even the professionals are required to devise a good line of interest? It makes the race more even! It proves that really the only person that counts is an author himself. The competition lies inside of himself.

As we discussed this matter, my class and I discovered that there can be a line of interest related to Time and Place and Ideas, or Emotions. I read a piece from the March, 1954 READERS DIGEST, "Ile de France to the Rescue". It describes a daring rescue at sea. I pointed out that the line of interest is always kept in front of the reader by a ticking clock and calendar. Part of the suspense lies in whether the Ile de France will get to the scene in time. We watch the minutes and hours slip by. We are also reminded that the great ship has a date at its New York pier. And that a salvage tug is on the way to try to save the Greenville's rich cargo. Thus, actually, there is a complex element of time, several lines of shortening time. They create dramatic conflict, which heightens that necessary reader interest. And taken together, they build the line of interest built around the element of Time.

But the line is further constructed in the terms of Place, and this helps to visualize more clearly for the reader than does an intangible such as Time, the movement of this story. (Bear in mind that it is an article, but it has the racy color and warmth of the type of fiction. It is fictionized as so much of prose writing is today; which may possibly explain not the disappearance of fiction but rather the substitution of true drama & factual stories from life.)

The reader picks this story up at a point where the Ile de France is speeding West 900 miles off the Irish coast. She turns and it is clearly defined from then on in terms of longitude and latitude where she moves. Later she resumes her own course. And the story closes on her deck as she hurries East on her return trip. Here is another line of interest. The thing to note is that for reader purposes all of these separate lines are merely part of a single dramatic line of interest that moves steadily forward, or must if the story is to succeed. Actually, there is a broken line in this story. It asks the reader at first to be interested in the rescue, then later asks him to become interested in one of the characters involved. This man should have been planted at the beginning. In fiction he would have been the MC.

There is another line. People. And now we remember that People exert an even stronger hook on a reader than Time or Place. We can identify ourselves with them. But don't forget that it is easier to identify one's self with a single person than several. That explains the necessity for choosing an MC and focussing on him alone, or primarily. That makes the line of interest stronger. Whenever you duplicate, you dissipate the strong appeal of your story.

Finally, let us think for a moment of the thing that Esther Forbes, the novelist, said to one of my students with whom she and I at a summer conference were working hard. "The story you have written," she remarked, "has a number of anachronisms in it. Things that are not true to the life you write about. It has one remarkable quality, however. It has 'narrative drive'. Once the reader picks it up, he finds it hard to let go. You have to a degree hooked him. You don't let him off."

That in a word is the purpose of a line of interest: to build a line with continuity & without breaks that the reader must follow!

FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE POETS WORKSHOP

The poem for discussion this month:

THE HIDDEN ONE

By Grace Holliday Scott

Beloved ghost—the child that you once were—
A form, that you, now changed beyond recall,
Know only through a misty, phantom wall;
Whose outlines seem to flicker, merge and blur.

He hoards the fleeting treasures of the past,
A homesick, disillusioned little wraith
Regretting now the loss of years and faith,
The loved perfumes whose sweetness did not last;

A wistful presence in the house of mind.
Who feels again the childish urge to grow—
The press of spirit on the flesh—to know
The flowering of youth, now left behind;

And he is self-impounded prisoner—
A hidden ghost—the child that you once were.

Once again we take a poem apart, and then put it together again with constructive and friendly criticisms. First, the compliments, then the criticisms and suggestions for possible improvement.

Olive Holstein Spencer: "In 'The Hidden One' I see the tender, repressed feeling that all adults have for the child that once they were!"

Lorraine Good: "It is a beautiful expression of thought, bright with imagery."

Gernie Hunter: "'A wistful presence in the house of mind' is a good line."

Theda L. Pobst: "To me this is the most appealing poem the Workshop has featured in a long time! The emotion and phrasing through line 12 have expressed beautifully a familiar experience. Line 14 is simply and effectively accomplished.

Jacqueline Tweton: "I like the picture words like 'beloved ghost', 'misty, phantom wall', 'Fleeting treasures', 'loved perfumes whose sweetness did not last', 'house of mind', and self-impounded prisoner'."

Bessie H. Hartling: "A well written poem, it has a human interest appeal. The title is a good one and likely to attract readers. The idea of ghostliness is well brought out, by the use of the words: misty, phantom, flicker, merge, blur, fleeting, wraith, wistful, so that we get the impression intended. It has a universal appeal, but is somewhat negative. It is a wistful little poem, bittersweet."

Olive Boynton: "This poem, with its unutterable nostalgia, is a heart-gripper! The theme is one of universal and immense appeal. Mrs. Scott ingeniously contrives to make the reader see the poem through a mist, even as she, the writer, sees the other self."

Clarence O. Adams: "This poem has an appeal that is heart warming."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "I like its universal & poignant appeal, the flow of the lines."

Avonne D. Ballin: "A fine sonnet, well done. Interesting reading."

Hylah R. Bender: "I like the craftsmanship."

Now the constructive criticisms:

Jacqueline Tweton: "I found the poem very depressing—too much yearning for the past that cannot return, and seemingly no interest in the present, or the person he is now."

Hylah R. Bender: "Many times age wouldn't be willing to live youth over again, unless it could be done in the light of experience. I personally would prefer to go on growing in maturity from where I now am."

Olive Boynton: "The couplet, like the entire sonnet, is too negative in its presentation. Each one must, I realize, write from her own experience. My own 'once-was' self is far from being a homesick, disillusioned, repining inner being. It is rather always fresh, young, fired with zeal. In fact, I often turn to it for a renewal of those attributes. That self is ever watchful; my mentor; a merciless critic, and always urging me forward! I would enjoy the poem more if she would use the same space occupied by that unimportant word 'self-impounded', and perhaps that hoary word 'ghost', to point up something vital about that wonderful Child-self. I believe a pithy couplet would sell the lovely poem and possibly suggest a thought with which to spark the title."

Bessie H. Hartling: "It is somewhat on the negative side. The sad tone might bar it from a number of publications. The poem makes readers think of an aged person, looking backward because he has lost the vision of youth. He is trying to hoard the treasures of the past in memory. They are fleeting only as we look back upon them. They were once real, & seemed enduring. Time seems short or fleeting only to the mature mind.

"The loss of faith is but the loss of the blind faith of childhood. It has the chance of growing up to an understanding faith. Children long to grow into adulthood, & the spirit longs to reach higher goals. But neither of these is a fruitless longing, and the author can bring that out.

"The poem might be better written in the 1st or 3rd person. We can't speak for everyone. The reader would have more sympathy, I think,

REWRITE

with a lonely figure. Everybody would not want to identify himself as feeling that way. The mature mind sees a purpose behind the visible scenes, shaping our destiny to a higher plan than we could imagine in our childhood. The author might make this the beginning of a longer poem, which brings out a happy or uplifting thought in the end."

There were several comments as to obscurity of meaning.

Gernie Hunter: "The first 4 lines don't make a complete statement. What is it that we know? Nor is the third stanza clear to me."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "There is a slight confusion of meaning in lines 10 & 11. Are not 'The press of spirit on the flesh' & 'childish urge to grow' in opposition? To my ear the 'to know' isn't quite clear in sentence structure."

Hylah R. Bender: "I do not like the word 'he' in this verse or in the final couplet. I believe it is confusing. In line 2 I would say 'Yet hoards the fleeting'—."

Clive Holstein Spencer: "I think this poem, possibly, would be more forceful if the author spoke to the child all through, instead of speaking of him part of the time, as in the first line of the second stanza, and again in the couplet."

Frances Anater: "Seems to change from second to third person."

Clarence O. Adams: "The thought is so vague, in spots, that it almost needs an interpreter to explain it. First the author is talking about something, then to something, and finally of something, and all of these some things are one and the same thing. Pronouns take a merry whirl.

"How could the 'beloved ghost' be the child that you once were?' And who knows this form? The author or the ghost? What flickers, and merges, and blurs? The ghost or the wall? In the second stanza, who really hoards the fleeting treasures of the past? The ghost or the author? This seems terribly mixed up. And in the third stanza, what feels that 'childish urge to grow?' The ghost or the memory? In the final couplet the author changes from 3rd person to the second person."

A few changes in punctuation would help to clear up the confusion. Suggestions by several workshop members were made, to which I'll add my own.

The sentence structure would be straightened out by using a semi-colon after line 4 instead of a period; a period after line 8, instead of a semi-colon; a comma after line 9 instead of a period; a period after line 12 instead of a semi-colon; and changing "Who" to "He" in line 10. As I interpret this poem it does not change the meaning, rather it clarifies it. However, there is still an ambiguity in line 4. As it stands now "outlines" refers to "wall". I believe the author meant it to refer back to "A form", which in turn refers back to "the child that you once were", which in turn again refers back to "Beloved ghost".

In defense of the author I disagree as to the declaration of Olive Holstein Spencer & Frances Anater together with Clarence Adams, that the author does not speak to the identical person all through. I think she does, and consistently, too. She is speaking to the grown-up person about the child he once was. She is speaking to "you" about "the child", the "beloved ghost", the "form", "the wraith", the "wistful presence", the "prisoner", the "hidden ghost".

Concerning the choice of words:

Theda L. Pobst: "The verbs 'flicker','merge', 'blur' express via sound just the right feeling of vague longing and nostalgia."

Olive Boynton: "I think line 4 might be rephrased to get away from the two 's' sounds together in 'outlines seem', and the close-together er, er, er, sounds." She suggests:

"Whose outlines flicker, merge and softly
blur."

Concerning Line 8:

Ora Lee Parthesius: "The loved perfumes made me stop short, for to my knowledge, the preferred and commonly used pronunciation of perfumes accents the first syllable, destroying that essential quality of smoothness. You might say, 'Loved fragrances' or omit the 'loved' keeping 'perfumes' and add another adjective to sweetness."

Lorraine Good also commented that this line did not read smoothly.

Concerning the word "He":

Hylah R. Bender: "I do not like the word 'He' in the second stanza nor in the final couplet. I think it is confusing."

Bessie H. Hartling: "The pronoun 'He' is just a little startling. I wonder if 'It' mightn't be better."

I do not agree with Hylah and Bessie. I would not want the child called "it". Though he may be "he" or "she" depending on reader choice, I think we can accept the author's use of "he" as applying to all imprisoned children male or female.

Concerning "self-impounded":

Hylah R. Bender: "The child that you once were is not a self-impounded prisoner, but an entity which disappeared through the process of growth that is perfectly natural. It is a law of nature we have to accept."

FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE POETS WORKSHOP

The poem for discussion this month:

THE HIDDEN ONE

By Grace Holliday Scott

Beloved ghost—the child that you once were—
A form, that you, now changed beyond recall,
Know only through a misty, phantom wall;
Whose outlines seem to flicker, merge and blur.

He hoards the fleeting treasures of the past,
A homesick, disillusioned little wraith
Regretting now the loss of years and faith,
The loved perfumes whose sweetness did not
last;

A wistful presence in the house of mind.
Who feels again the childish urge to grow—
The press of spirit on the flesh—to know
The flowering of youth, now left behind;

And he is self-impounded prisoner—
A hidden ghost—the child that you once were.

Once again we take a poem apart, and then put it together again with constructive and friendly criticisms. First, the compliments, then the criticisms and suggestions for possible improvement.

Olive Holstein Spencer: "In 'The Hidden One' I see the tender, repressed feeling that all adults have for the child that once they were"

Lorraine Good: "It is a beautiful expression of thought, bright with imagery."

Gernie Hunter: "'A wistful presence in the house of mind' is a good line."

Theda L. Pobst: "To me this is the most appealing poem the Workshop has featured in a long time! The emotion and phrasing through line 12 have expressed beautifully a familiar experience. Line 14 is simply and effectively accomplished.

Jacqueline Tweton: "I like the picture words like 'beloved ghost', 'misty, phantom wall', 'Fleeting treasures', 'loved perfumes whose sweetness did not last', 'house of mind', and self-impounded prisoner'."

Bessie H. Hartling: "A well written poem, it has a human interest appeal. The title is a good one and likely to attract readers. The idea of ghostliness is well brought out, by the use of the words: misty, phantom, flicker, merge, blur, fleeting, wraith, wistful, so that we get the impression intended. It has a universal appeal, but is somewhat negative. It is a wistful little poem, bittersweet."

Olive Boynton: "This poem, with its unutterable nostalgia, is a heart-gripper! The theme is one of universal and immense appeal. Mrs. Scott ingeniously contrives to make the reader see the poem through a mist, even as she, the writer, sees the other self."

Clarence O. Adams: "This poem has an appeal that is heart warming."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "I like its universal & poignant appeal, the flow of the lines."

Avonne D. Ballin: "A fine sonnet, well done. Interesting reading."

Hylah R. Bender: "I like the craftsmanship."

Now the constructive criticisms:

Jacqueline Tweton: "I found the poem very depressing—too much yearning for the past that cannot return, and seemingly no interest in the present, or the person he is now."

Hylah R. Bender: "Many times age wouldn't be willing to live youth over again, unless it could be done in the light of experience. I personally would prefer to go on growing in maturity from where I now am."

Olive Boynton: "The couplet, like the entire sonnet, is too negative in its presentation. Each one must, I realize, write from her own experience. My own 'once-was' self is far from being a homesick, disillusioned, repining inner being. It is rather always fresh, young, fired with zeal. In fact, I often turn to it for a renewal of those attributes. That self is ever watchful; my mentor; a merciless critic, and always urging me forward! I would enjoy the poem more if she would use the same space occupied by that unimportant word 'self-impounded', and perhaps that hoary word 'ghost', to point up something vital about that wonderful Child-self. I believe a pithy couplet would sell the lovely poem and possibly suggest a thought with which to spark the title."

Bessie H. Hartling: "It is somewhat on the negative side. The sad tone might bar it from a number of publications. The poem makes readers think of an aged person, looking backward because he has lost the vision of youth. He is trying to hoard the treasures of the past in memory. They are fleeting only as we look back upon them. They were once real, & seemed enduring. Time seems short or fleeting only to the mature mind.

"The loss of faith is but the loss of the blind faith of childhood. It has the chance of growing up to an understanding faith. Children long to grow into adulthood, & the spirit longs to reach higher goals. But neither of these is a fruitless longing, and the author can bring that out.

"The poem might be better written in the 1st or 3rd person. We can't speak for everyone. The reader would have more sympathy, I think,

with a lonely figure. Everybody would not want to identify himself as feeling that way. The mature mind sees a purpose behind the visible scenes, shaping our destiny to a higher plan than we could imagine in our childhood. The author might make this the beginning of a longer poem, which brings out a happy or uplifting thought in the end."

There were several comments as to obscurity of meaning.

Gernie Hunter: "The first 4 lines don't make a complete statement. What is it that we know? Nor is the third stanza clear to me."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "There is a slight confusion of meaning in lines 10 & 11. Are not 'The press of spirit on the flesh' & 'childish urge to grow' in opposition? To my ear the 'to know' isn't quite clear in sentence structure."

Hylah R. Bender: "I do not like the word 'he' in this verse or in the final couplet. I believe it is confusing. In line 2 I would say 'Yet hoards the fleeting'—."

Olive Holstein Spencer: "I think this poem, possibly, would be more forceful if the author spoke to the child all through, instead of speaking of him part of the time, as in the first line of the second stanza, and again in the couplet."

Frances Anater: "Seems to change from second to third person."

Clarence O. Adams: "The thought is so vague, in spots, that it almost needs an interpreter to explain it. First the author is talking about something, then to something, and finally of something, and all of these some things are one and the same thing. Pronouns take a merry whirl.

"How could the 'beloved ghost' be the child that you once were?' And who knows this form? The author or the ghost? What flickers, and merges, and blurs? The ghost or the wall? In the second stanza, who really hoards the fleeting treasures of the past? The ghost or the author? This seems terribly mixed up. And in the third stanza, what feels that 'childish urge to grow?' The ghost or the memory? In the final couplet the author changes from 3rd person to the second person."

A few changes in punctuation would help to clear up the confusion. Suggestions by several workshop members were made, to which I'll add my own.

The sentence structure would be straightened out by using a semi-colon after line 4 instead of a period; a period after line 8, instead of a semi-colon; a comma after line 9 instead of a period; a period after line 12 instead of a semi-colon; and changing "Who" to "He" in line 10. As I interpret this poem it does not change the meaning, rather it clarifies it. However, there is still an ambiguity in line 4. As it stands now "outlines" refers to "wall". I believe the author meant it to refer back to "A form", which in turn refers back to "the child that you once were", which in turn again refers back to "Beloved ghost".

In defense of the author I disagree as to the declaration of Olive Holstein Spencer & Frances Anater together with Clarence Adams, that the author does not speak to the identical person all through. I think she does, and consistently, too. She is speaking to the grown-up person about the child he once was. She is speaking to "you" about "the child", the "beloved ghost", the "form", "the wraith", the "wistful presence", the "prisoner", the "hidden ghost".

Concerning the choice of words:

Theda L. Pobst: "The verbs 'flicker', 'merge', 'blur' express via sound just the right feeling of vague longing and nostalgia."

Olive Boynton: "I think line 4 might be rephrased to get away from the two 's' sounds together in 'outlines seem', and the close-together er, er, er, sounds." She suggests:
"Whose outlines flicker, merge and softly
blur."

Concerning Line 8:

Ora Lee Parthesius: "The loved perfumes made me stop short, for to my knowledge, the preferred and commonly used pronunciation of perfumes accents the first syllable, destroying that essential quality of smoothness. You might say, 'Loved fragrances' or omit the 'loved' keeping 'perfumes' and add another adjective to sweetness."

Lorraine Good also commented that this line did not read smoothly.

Concerning the word "He":

Hylah R. Bender: "I do not like the word 'He' in the second stanza nor in the final couplet. I think it is confusing."

Bessie H. Hartling: "The pronoun 'He' is just a little startling. I wonder if 'It' might't be better."

I do not agree with Hylah and Bessie. I would not want the child called "it". Though he may be "he" or "she" depending on reader choice, I think we can accept the author's use of "he" as applying to all imprisoned children male or female.

Concerning "self-impounded":

Hylah R. Bender: "The child that you once were is not a self-impounded prisoner, but an entity which disappeared through the process of growth that is perfectly natural. It is a law of nature we have to accept."

REWRITE

Bessie H. Hartling: "How can he be self-impounded? If he is impounded at all he can't help himself. His wistfulness indicates that. Is it the child who is wistful or the grown man? The dream of the child has not been fulfilled, but is that the fault of the child? The young have visions, and the old dreams."

We must be careful in our criticisms to be on guard against making too literal an interpretation where an author is speaking figuratively. Hylah is correct in saying that the child disappeared through the natural process of growth. But Grace Scott is also correct, in picturing the "beloved ghost", for in this way she is telling us that one can never get away from his past. It is always there in the background ready to influence the decisions he makes in the present. As Wordsworth said: "The child is father of the man", or as Milton said before him: "The childhood shows the man,/As morning shows the day."

He is self-impounded in the sense that the grown-up half of himself is keeping the child-half imprisoned, reluctant to let go of youth.

The danger in being too literal where poetry is concerned is that we may lapse into rhymed or unrhymed expository prose. It is figuratively speaking that puts so much intangible beauty into our language.

Theda L. Pobst makes a good suggestion when she says: "How about 'He is a self-impounded prisoner' instead of 'And he is"...

Concerning the title:

Avonne D. Ballin: "Good."

Ora Lee Parthesius: "Change title to 'Little Wraith'."

Clarence C. Adams: "I'm not sure that I like the title. It seems a bit shallow. I would think a title that better conveyed the spirit of the poem would be more appropriate. My suggestion would be 'From Memory's Store' or 'Memory's Tryst'."

Theda L. Pobst: "'Beloved Ghost' would be a good title."

My own preference is for the original title, "The Hidden One". It says so much in so few words about the child spirit, which is always with us, and yet usually invisible.

What do you think? The purpose of these informal discussions is not to come to any definite conclusion about a poem, but to get a good slice of reader reaction, to hear what other people think, to weigh each comment & then to decide for ourselves what should be saved and what should be discarded. Writing is intangible. We cannot pin it down to one answer as we can a sum in arithmetic. The answer may be different for each one of us, and still be a good answer. Our own answers will be different as we grow in experience, and our tastes change.

Concerning Markets the following were suggested: L.H.J., GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, Washington-STAR, NATIONAL PARENT-TEACHER, IDEALS, The MAGNIFICAT, POETRY DIGEST, AMERICAN WEAVE,.. The AMERICAN BARD, CARMEL PINE CONE, RECURRENCE, The LANTERN, WINGS, The COUNTRY POET, GRIT, and various religious and home publications.

The poem for discussion in June:

A POEM IS A MYSTIC LIGHT

By Bessie H. Hartling

A poem is a mystic light,
Gleaming distant through the night.
We seek it with a humble mind,
That in our heart its gleam may find
Words that speak our soul's command
To touch and heal; to understand
Our brother's need; the world's distress,
And errors that we must confess;
The rage of passion to be still,
Surrender of our personal will.

A poem is a mystic light,—
A star that beckons through the night.

Bessie's biography of her experience runs as follows: First poem published in 1936 in CHURCH WORK, an Episcopalian magazine in Nova Scotia, Canada. She has studied writing with Boston University extension courses, correspondence courses and with Bill in his workshop courses in Cambridge. She is a member of the Agnes Carr Writer's Club and the Poetry Fellowship of Maine. She has placed her poems widely in magazines and newspapers. But this poem has not been to market.

Deadline for comment on this poem is: May 10th.

Don't forget that a poem to be eligible & be used in the Workshop must be accompanied by a constructive, helpful comment on whatever poem is being discussed in the current issue. Help the other fellow and he in return will help you. Send in your comments & your poems!

We pay $1 for each poem used. Don't forget to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelop for the return of your poem. Occasionally I have time to make brief comments regarding the poems we cannot use. But obviously I cannot return poems that have not been backed with return envelops.

TWO BOOKS FOR POETS

POEMS: 1923-54. e. e. cummings. Harcourt, Brace & Co. $5.75. Whatever your opinion of this controversial poet, here is his work of three decades. A valuable book worth studying for the stature of the man, the meaning of the verse.

THE SITUATION OF POETRY. Jacques and Raissa Maritain. Philosophical Library. $2.75. Essay on the place of poetry. Good sense.

DON'T BE FOOLED BY FLIM-FLAM!

The old short story anthology racket as a way for unknown writers to become known, is here again! The naive are led to believe as gospel truth that (1) editors will actually read these "collections"; (2) professionals will lend their stories for inclusion; that royalties will repay the fees (and they are usually stiff ones) a writer is required to pay for inclusion in a melange of unedited, miscellaneous and incompetent writing!

Only recently the publisher of one of the two recognized annual collections of "best" stories, affirmed frankly in a paid advertisement that there is no market for even a good anthology of short stories. The editor of this distinguished series boasted to me, a few years ago, that one of his best "editions" had sold less than 12,000 copies. The publisher today does not begin to earn anything (over and above his investment) until about 7,000 copies have been sold! One of the editors of this same publishing firm in a friendly moment of confidence admitted to me frankly that such a series was a prestige item only. It added literary standing to the publisher's name, attracted authors with an idea or story that could be merchandised at a profit, and if the publisher had presses, binderies, etc., it kept these running.

It is preposterous and tragic to think of inexperienced writers being duped into buying any part of such a foolish "deal" as an anthology short-cut express to fame & recognition by editors. Yet thousands bite every year!

HERE AND THERE IN BOOK PUBLISHING

Most Popular Book Subject. Here's a tip! In the spring announcement number of books, soon to be be published, PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY carried more than a column devoted to books the titles of which began with "How to——". There were 47 separate titles. "Man——" was another popular one: 16 titles, while there were 30 beginning with "New—". And 13 with "This—". "Your--" was also popular: 24. Another prolific one was "All—". But if you want real competition perhaps you had better start your title with "American—". That ran up 42!

IF (Worlds of Science Fiction), James L. Quinn, Kingston, N. Y. We received a copy of the March issue in late January (carrying a slug line: "Next issue on sale Feb. 10th!") It contained 3 novelettes, 4 short stories, and 3 filler features. The editor published a signed editorial by himself, viewing with almost hysterical alarm the possible merging of the A.F.L. & C.I.O. (The late Sen. Taft, in his final bid for re-election proved labor organizations do not necessarily control the votes of their members.)

The Stable Press, Rockport, Me., (new firm) will print for Falmouth Publishing House. The latter has done some subsidy publishing.

THREE WRITERS' CONFERENCES

The Maine Writers' Conference, Dan Kelly, 37 Stone St., Augusta, Maine, will be having its 15th annual session, at Ocean Park, Me., Aug. 17-19th. Henry Beston will be featured speaker. (He is great!) Richard Merrifield, former YANKEE editor, will be back; also Elva and Bill, we expect. Poetry tournament & editor-writer forums, workshops, etc. We'll be housed again at the Ocean Park Hotel and Loring Williams, (AMERICAN WEAVE), Doris Marston and other familiar leaders will be active.

The Philadelphia Regional Writers' Conference, Florence Kerigan, registra, Box 897., Philadelphia 5, Pa., will have its 7th Annual sessions at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, June 15-17th. Workshops in 16 or more types of writing. Lots of big name writers & editors. Bill will be the literary consultant, for the second year.

Manuscript Contest. Prizes in 12 different types of writing. Fee for each type, $2.50. Address as above for rules. Closes May 15th.

Clark University Writers' Conference, Summer School, Prof. Rudolph Nunnemacher, dir., 950 Main St., Worcester 10, Mass. This is a new conference, plans for which were in the final stages of being drawn as REWRITE went to press. Prof. Nunnemacher, Willian E. Harris, and a member of the English Department will supervise.

The dates are July 15 & 16th. We hope to have Workshop Groups, some ms. analysis, several panel discussions led by editors and an agent. A distinguished staff of professional writers is expected to lead the meetings, and one or two outstanding writers as evening speakers. The emphasis will be on practical help, backed by university instructional standards, for working writers at all levels, and for those interested in the teaching of writing.

REWRITE will report final details in June, but watch for announcements of names in the magazines of interest to writers, and daily newspapers. One thing we can promise though, Elva Ray Harris is expected to assist in the Poetry Workshops, and Bill who is Chairman, will act as standby, to fill where needed.

A MARKET NOTE OR TWO

The Laramore-Rader Group, Lillian Grant., 1536 S. W. 9th St., Miami, Fla., offers $25 for "best poem on any subject, 30 lines, or less." Two unsigned copies, plus envelop with identifying information: title, name, & address. Closes: May 1, 1955.

Borestone Poetry Awards, Box 388, Occidental College, Los Angeles 41, Cal. is offering approximately $3,000 in prizes for various types and lengths of poetry. Write as above, inclosing return postage. (We are obliged to AMERICAN WEAVE for these reports.)

THE KORN QUATRAIN CONTEST

Here are the results of the prize contest sponsored by Mr. Albert Ralph Korn for best quatrains.

First, the Judges:

Loring Williams, poet and editor, AMERICAN WEAVE. Publisher, "The Durham Chap Book".

Anne Campbell, poet and nationally syndicated poetry columnist, The Detroit NEWS.

John De Stefano, poet and editor of POETRY DIGEST, which he publishes.

Next, the winners:

First Prize: $15, Stanton A. Coblentz, editor of WINGS.

Second, $10 : Robert London, Pittsburgh,Pa.

Third, $5, : Gertrude Durend, Canandaigua, New York.

Honorable Mention:
Myra Burnham Terrell, Lansdowne, Pa.

Carol James, Edgewater, New Jersey

Hylah R. Bender, Munster, Indiana.

For our readers' interest Elva and I in our capacities as clerks of the Contest are glad to report that the winners were closely bunched, and for the most part were chosen by all three judges. It being our responsibility to reconcile any differences among the judges, we used a numerical system, and carried it down through the first 12 poets, which each of the judges selected. Thus, the first place counted 12, second 11, etc. Mr. Coblentz won two firsts and did not come in at all in the third judge's score. But each of the other winners won points from all of the judges. Three other poets would perhaps be entitled some credit for honorable prize mention. None of them received points unanimously from three judges, nor did their totals (with one exception) bring them up beyond 5th place. It was our considered feeling that in the case of the one exception, a poet with three selections, one of them being for second place, rated higher than another who only earned a 3rd and 4th with no other selection. Especially since we placed the quality of the poems in the same order.

Except for the high choice of Stanton's poem by two judges, which gave him 24 points, 4 more than his nearest rival, all of those finishing second down to the third honorable mention inclusively, were separated by only 6 points! So you can see it was close. And the judges reported that on the whole quality was rather high. The quatrain is not an easy medium to make memorable either in form or content, although it lends itself to effective use. We wish to thank the judges for a good job and a prompt one.

Here are the prize winning quatrains:

1st Prize Stanton Coblentz

THE CELEBRITY AND THE SEER

One spoke in thunder that the millions heard,
But soon was mute as some last season's rhyme.
One carved in silence, but his humble word
Shouted in granite from the slopes of time.

2nd Prize Robert London

"CONTINUED STORY"

Do not be too impatient for the next
Installment, foolish heart, for there will be
Only another chapter—,one whose text
May well contain the great catastrophe.

3rd Prize Gertrude Durand

"UNCONQUERED"

Some things there are ungovernable still.
Who can bind with chains the restless sea?
Who can noose and hold the leaping wind,
Or keep a winged thought in slavery?

REWRITE is happy to have had the privilege of providing this opportunity and profit to a few poets.

A RADIO MARKET FOR LIGHT VERSE

WBBM (CBS Radio), Al Bland, pro. dir., 410 No. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill., offers Monday through Friday from 2:45 - 3:15 P.M. (CST), "Rhyme Does Pay". From Budd Blume, dir. of pub. rel., we have received this exclusive report:

"Essentially, 'Rhyme Does Pay' is a mail-pull program, in which we ask our listeners to jot down their little jingles or humorous poems and send them in. If they are judged, by one of our staff writers, to have sufficient quality, then they are read on the air. Every poem that is read is worth $2 for the author. And every poem that is judged to be the day's winner (the best of the lot) pays $5 to the author. Ordinarily, there are ten poems used per broadcast."

For the information of prospective contestants, Mr. Blume adds that "the accent must be placed on whimsical, humorous, & original jingles of no more than 12 lines. In my opinion, someone with original-type humor is able to do quite well on this show." He added a sad commentary. Almost half of the poems that people send in, he believes, saw the light first in humor magazines or nationally-distributed sources. "We've seen 'em all and we would welcome fresh blood. Tell your people to come along...for though it's a pittance, 'Rhyme Does Pay' on WBBM."

Those cheaters are the people who spoil a market for writers. Members of the WCS Family have an opportunity to prove their responsibility, and to justify the continuance of this good feature filler market.

NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING, Margaret Cousins, 57th St. at 8th Ave., NYC 19, not long ago dropped out its usually monthly poetry page. We immediately asked Miss Cousins about it. In a matter of a few days we received the following reply:

"For technical reasons, we occasionally are forced to drop out a page at the last minute. The fact that the poetry is self-contained, makes it a natural victim. We're sorry that it had to be omitted a couple of times, but we hoped to have it back immediately. Thank you for your interest. Sincerely, Margaret Cousins."

The Roundup, Leslie Ernenwein, 6208 E Pima, Tucson, Ari. This is the official publication of the "Western Writers of America", a live and highly vocal organization, active in promoting the wares of its members. The magazine (monthly) is available to non-members ($2.50). It's well worth the price.

The membership of the WWA is interesting. It is listed on the inside cover. Novelist members pay $15 annual dues; magazine writers $10, as associate members, many of whom are well known editors and agents!

The Copp Clark Co., Ltd., 495 Wellington, West, Toronto, Ont., Canada, has issued the 108th annual edition of the "Canadian Almanac and Directory". A valuable compendium of often hard-to-get addresses and information. (Lists all Canadian magazines and newspaper addresses, for instance.) $11.00.

"What Is a Customer?" Under the heading a recent issue of the N. E. Tel. & Tel. Co. in its little give-away sheet wrote: "A customer is not dependent on us; we are dependent on him. A customer is not an interruption of our work; he is the purpose of it. A customer is doing us a favor by letting us serve his needs; he is not an outsider to our business, but a part of it. A customer is the most important person in the world to us."

Ever think of editors in that light? They don't have to buy your tripe, pardon me, the literature you write. Writers come like the proverbial street car; and there is an even greater amount of competition in the writing business than there is in the field of transportation. Good idea to remember that.

"Sarah Lawrence Studies". We have received a copy of the 7th volume of these undergraduate writings by students at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, N. Y. Published every three or four years since 1933, about 16 students (this issue) have a chance each time to see their serious writing in print! Good idea! Quite a bit of quality, too.

How Far Publicity Agents Will Go! A news release issued to publicize a book, recently offered editors a free 500-word article.

HOW MUCH CAN YOU USE RESEARCH?

Here is a question that comes to our desk repeatedly. "In writing factual material obtained from research, bits here and there—no direct quotes or exact replicas—how much 'borrowing' is ethical? Are newspaper facts in the public domain? How about source credits?" In other words, how do you go about using your research? How do you frame up articles after you have collected material?

A safe generality is that you become full enough from your feast of reading so you can throw away the book and speak out of personal knowledge, study or enthusiasm, which is a form of belief. There are fiction writers who write about regions, people and places, which actually are totally unfamiliar. They have never visited them, or at least rarely. But they have a feeling for them. That's the hard way of doing it. But it is possible. I myself have done that and had my material accepted as authentic. I have written of people who lived before I was born, and places I have never seen. Yet the material was accepted by expert writers and readers.

That is the first requirement: to be able to handle facts as a good reporter; and also to have enough imagination to give readers the feel of them; to make them "come alive" and seem vivid, as vivid as life. All facts are timeless. They are in the "public domain". But their presentation is not. If you have had an exclusive personal interview or been somewhere no one else has been, your unique presentation of the facts is not to be borrowed. A book publisher's editor (and he ought to know better!) advised a writer recently that "anything in print more than 56 years probably is in the public domain." It is not so. Some years ago the play, "Charley's Aunt," became available in that way. But an enterprising director copyrighted his special version. Now production of the original infringes his property, it is claimed!

In research it is a rule of thumb to have several sources. Gather the facts that each writer affirms; be careful of those you are not able to pin down by a cross-check of two or more. Be very careful in using dates and personal names. Both for correctness, & the fact that they can prove you borrowed from a specific individual source, who had information no one else did. If possible, build up or contribute some new information which no one else has dug up. Leave more than you're taking, for the next chap who comes along.. Or tidy up and sort out fact from rumor and gossip.

In a sense, you are an auditor straightening out the tangled web of history. If you are writing history authoritatively, you'll need to use footnotes. If you are a reporter or story-teller, you do not credit those who went before. You merely give your telling of the "story". You take the facts, and color them with your skill and personality.

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Margaret Schulz
Features: TOWN JOURNAL, FLOWER GROWER & POPULAR GARDENING, HORTICULTURE, WESTERN LIVING (Canada), PROFITABLE HOBBIES.

Sarah Zimmerman
Features: THIS DAY, TWELVE/FIFTEEN, and Pittsburg PRESS, VENTURE.

Belle S. Mooney
Article: SIR.

Marjorie S. Scheuer
Poems: C.S.MONITOR, INDEPENDENT WOMAN.

Mary Morgan Ware
Poems: The CIRCLE, POET'S FRIEND, MUSINGS, VISION, etc.

Avonne D. Ballin
Poems: The ARCHER, WESTMINSTER, Oakland TRIBUNE, San Fran. EXAMINER, Ari.SUN.

Helen Langworthy
Articles: Michigan FARMER, Grand Rapids PRESS, VISION (story), TRAILER LIFE.

Myra Burnham Terrell
Poem: Washington STAR. (Previously: won prizes, but not published, in contest sponsored by Federation of Womens' Clubs and later by Phila. Regional Writers Conference.

Edward W. Ludwig
Sci. Fict. Story: IMAGINATION, N.Y.POST.

Frances Durland
Juvenile Story: FORWARD. (And 5 resales of a 12/15 story, 2 of a FORWARD one)

Winona Strachan
Serial: YOUTH'S COMRADE, TEEN TIME (2part)
Juvenile Story: TEEN TIME.

Bessie Berg:
Poems: WESTMINSTER, DESERT, The LIMB (a publication issued by radio KFI, Los Angeles, Cal.) CATS, San Francisco EXAMINER, Poets-Haven NEWS-JOURNAL.

Frances Anater
Poem: The ARCHER, POETRY DIGEST (Feb.)

Harry S. Goodwin
Articles: Rochester, N. H. COURIER.

Evelyn Reed
Article: N. H. PROFILES (probably Apr.)

Hazel May Wynn
Juvenile story: CHILD'S COMPANION. (We were touched to see this story appear following Miss Wynn's death.)

Jennie M. Palen
Poem: WINGS.

Mary Lothrop
Poem: POETRY DIGEST

Send in your B. A. record, all of it!

SOME PRACTICAL NOTES AND NEWS

Here's a tip! Helen Langworthy is the kind of writer who frequently passes along notes from her experience to help other writers. A recent comment she sent us is that "in many cases when editors send 'overstocked' slips it is merely a polite rejection. In one instance, when I thought I was on fairly good terms with the publication, I resubmitted a story...and sold it there."

That type of flexible technique is a very excellent one. I always advise writers that they should regard every rejection carefully; scrutinize it for any tell-tale signs a publication may have considered a ms. seriously before sending it back. I have helped a number of writers to revise and later get acceptances from the same editor who previously rejected a ms. Often with a commendation on the revision. Don't be discouraged; keep on knocking at least until you hear the key in the door turn. Study all the overtones of r.s.

And be the kind of writer who helps other writers and editors. You will be surprised, I know, to see how many doors it will unlock for you. No writer or agent can hope to cover adequately every market. Or even the few comparatively speaking of special interest, or wide open to him and his wares. The only reason REWRITE can give the accurate, timely and individualized coverage to so widely varying markets, is that we have help, wonderful tips and leads from many writers all over the United States and Canada, all over the world, indeed. A fine springboard for us.

The Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project, founded in 1937 and developed unceasingly by Mrs. Elizabeth Fontaine for 18 years, got a fine coverage in an illustrated article, in the Christian Science MONITOR (Dec. 31 1954) For a number of years REWRITE has contributed four subscription awards annually.

REWRITE is now available for 1955, in the U. S. Information Service reading room, Bombay, India.

The Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project offers $4,000 in prizes (the 9th annual contest)

REPORT ON THE WCS SCHOLARSHIP FUND...

The WCS Scholarship Fund for handicapped, shut-in writers or those suffering from miscellaneous misfortunes, helped 24 persons in 1954. A total of $42.15 was dispensed. Not a large sum, but it brought comfort and the spiritual lift that comes when the friendly hand of fellowship is extended in times when one needs it most.

This good work was made possible by gifts ranging from a few pennies to several dollars from approximately 20 friends in the WCS Family. Receipts totalled $35.65, leaving a deficit of $6.50. Small balances from previous years took care of this. Bill organized the Fund in 1942. It's been busy ever since.

THE FICTION WORKSHOP

There were only five hardy souls who tried the Fiction Workshop assignment which we offered them in the last issue. Yet it was a basic one for successful sales to the slick or smaller popular magazines. If you cannot write a good love scene, you might as well be a tightrope artist or snake charmer. I was greatly heartened, though, by the excellent tries made by Lillian Malloy, Frances Anater, Jac Tweton, Ora Lee Parthesius and Bessie Berg. Their entries are too long to reprint, but each of them has received a free comment in addition to what I am going to offer here. They also gained valuable experience. And I shall be surprised if one of the stories that will be written from the practice scenes does not sell.

It was interesting to see that while this assignment only stated a love scene in which the girl at first refuses, then changes her mind, some of the scenes were opening ones, others were climactic ones near the end. All were good rounded scenes, well sustained and all built up to a higher level than the one where they started. Miss Anater's was surely the most original. It was laid in a cave in the opal fields of Australia. It was intended to be part of a long story. I think if the author filled in the plot background and stops where she does now, she might have a salable story for at least the missionary type of religious magazines, and possibly a native Australian or English magazine.

Miss Berg's story had the slower pace and more reflective style of a novel. It has an excellent tone and real poetic imagery, however, that give it warmth in spite of the occasional parts where the author intrudes, & also a long or literary word creeps in, breaking the illusion of the two lovers handling the scene by themselves. Despite its wordiness, this contribution has a lilt due partly to the poesy of the style, the visualization of the images, and the emotional drive of the author's narration. A tightened hold on the material by the author would sharpen the impact on the reader.

The contributions by Mrs. Parthesius, Miss Tweton and Miss Malloy were not quite as effective. In the first we did not participate quite enough. The characters were not identified as individuals sufficiently nor their background stresses clearly established. In the second too much dialogue and too long a scene prevented the line of interest moving forward well. And in the third the conflict is rather a subtle one of good taste. Such a theme is difficult to keep from turning, or slipping over into snobbishness.

The problems connected with such a scene, whether it be an introductory or later one, came out clearly as I hoped they would. It is not merely a matter of letting two characters fight it out. A man and a woman must be introduced; a setting must be set up; the

Please turn to P. 19

THE NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

The first two months of the new year have been busy ones at WCS House. Most of January passed quickly between Bill's "Creative Writing" workshop course drawing rapidly to the close of the first semester and lots of mss. coming in for WCS analysis and counselling. Bill was faced with huge piles of mss. submitted in the Course, and the novel task of setting an examination, then grading the 20 odd writers of these.

Without any break between, the second semester of "Creative Writing" followed after the first immediately. And almost before we could draw a long breath, Bill plunged into rounding up a staff for the 1st Annual Clark University Writers' Conference. It is because of this and continued WCS work you'll receive REWRITE a few days behind schedule.

The Conference staff had begun to line up as REWRITE went to press. Here are some interesting highlights:

David C. Woodbury, writer for READERS DIGEST and author of "Atoms For Peace" (just out!)

Eleanore M. Jewett, author of many juvenile books and short stories, to discuss writing for children.

Mabel Brown Farwell, who has three short stories and a novel one-shot scheduled shortly in The AMERICAN, hopes to be with us on Saturday for informal talk and questions.

Alton Hall Blackington, author of a book of "Yankee Yarns", and radio story-teller, expects to talk about a long and practical experience as feature writer and interviewer.

Ivan Sandrof, Worcester TELEGRAM feature parade staff writer and author of slick magazine articles and short stories, will be available for all of his specialties, and an analysis of the TV market, too!

We expect some other exciting developments also. So, keep in touch and join us in Worcester in July!

A SHORT SHORT MARKET AND A BOOK

The Boston POST which threw its 30-year old daily short story feature out of the window in favor of newspaper serials, returned to the original plan by buying 1,300-word shorts—instead of 500 words! But don't be fooled!! These are N. Y. Daily NEWS, Katherine Kelley, 220 E. 42nd St., NYC 17, short stories that are syndicated. The NEWS is said to pay $50 for each one they buy and use about 3 months later.

PARTY OF ONE. Clifton Fadiman. World Publishing Co. $5.00. Selections from the radio m.c.'s voluminous writings. Good to have, but much of it shows the loosening, & often windy effect of talking into a microphone.

NEW BOOKS FOR WRITERS

HOLSTERS & HEROES. Preface, Noel M. Loomis. The Macmillan Co. $2.95. A dozen stories by members of the Western Writers of America. Mr. Loomis, the president, says these are cream of the crop quality. They represent a cross section of history, cow country, law and order and the West today. Good to study. The authors included are leaders in the field.

PRIZE STORIES, 1955. Paul Engle and Hansford Martin. Doubleday & Co. $3.95. The 35th edition of the O.Henry Awards. The present editors have widened their search to include a larger number of popular, sci. fic. and experimental magazines, but the NEW YORKER is winner of the sweepstake with 5 stories, including two of the three prize stories. Good reading for serious craftsmen.

THE ART OF MAKING SENSE. Lionel Ruby. J. B. Lippincott Co. $3.75. There have been a lot of synthetic books telling you how to write better & read faster. This book explores in a thorough way the subject of Logic that is no longer taught on the collegiate level in many universities. Yet it is an essential, a "must" for all writers who would make their "lies" stick. It teaches writers how to think straight and keep their material authentic, documented, accurate, probable and plausible at all times. And it is readable and entertaining. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

CONCISE DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN GRAMMAR & USAGE. Ed. R.C.Whitford & J.R.Foster. Philosophical Library. $4.50. Arranged in dictionary form, this book does not seem as practical as the old fashioned book of grammar.

THE SOLITARY SINGER. Gay Wilson Allen. The Macmillan Co. $8.00. A "definitive" & critical biography of Walt Whitman. Prof. Allen has combined scholarship and a quarter century of study with a readable and interesting life of the great man. We recommend it.

AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF MODERN AMERICAN HUMOR.. Ed. Bennett Cerf. Hanover House. $3.95. Mr. Cerf favors the "belly laugh". This book is therefore, neither an "encyclopaedia" nor the complete cross-section of humor that the title implies. Moreover, even when humor's organized geographically, as here, two famous laws operate: (1) what's one man's meat, is another's poison; (2) an overdose of corn—taken in dry or liquid form, inevitably results in severe head-aches. A useful reference, however.

YOUTH'S COMPANION. Ed. Lovell Thompson. Houghton Mifflin Co. $6.00. Assisted by three of the former editors (M.A.DeWolfe Howe, Arthur Stanwood Pier, Harford Powel), Lovell Thompson, son of a fourth editor, has performed a labor of love in skimming the cream of perhaps one of America's greatest magazines. A host of great names represented in many instances by rare early pieces. A Writers' Book Club Selection.

PLAYWRIGHT AT WORK. John van Druten. The Writer, Inc. $3.00. Originally published in 1953 by Harper & Brothers, this intelligent and thoughtful book by the very modest, but successful playwright, has been taken over, and future editions will be issued by, The Writer, Inc. Disclaiming any attempt to offer a textbook, he writes only from his own experience, thoughts, study and love of the Theater. A charming book expressing so much truth about writing, we recommend it highly for all writers. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

FAN MARLOW. Jane Hardy. E.P.Dutton & Co.$3. Starting with an inherently good idea, this book tries too hard to be sophisticated and typical of life behind the scenes in a literary agency. As a result it exaggerates to the point of distortion, is very uneven and lacks emotional warmth. This is unfortunate because the author writes from actual experience as an agent.

LOVE CAN BE DANGEROUS. Octavus Roy Cohen... The Macmillan Co. $2.75. This slow moving & "tired prose" detective story, rather cynical and brittle in its humor is probably realistic enough. But it is a far cry from the excellent story-telling and technical skill of Cohen when he began amassing a record of 65 published books. Good police background.

TWIGS AS VARIED BENT. James Boyer May. Sparrow Mags. (Vagrom Chapbook) $1.50. An interesting and valuable personal analysis of the role played by little magazines in developing creative and talented writers throughout the world. The author is editor of TRACE.

THE LETTERS OF W. B. YEATS. Ed. Allen Wade. The Macmillan Co. $9.50. This is a monumental pile of material. Some of it trivial, & much of it exuding his philosophy of living as a man and an artist. One wishes at times he could read the letters that provoked the outbursts of rich emotion and wise thought.

MARKET FOR A BROADWAY PLAY

An established Broadway producer has asked REWRITE to list him as a market for high calibre mss. for Broadway production. There is no reading fee, but this producer's want is limited to plays "about human beings and their problems and character. Character development rather than mere incident." He is not interested in farces, mysteries, period and costume plays, or melodramas. Dramatist Guild contract used, and mss. must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped return-envelop. Address: Room 705, 134 West 58thSt., NYC 19.

The producer in question is an established producer-director. He requested that his name be withheld simply because "while I am hoping to discover meritorious material, I have found from experience it is necessaryI discourage any writer whose work shows quality anything less than excellent."

CURRENT PRIZE CONTESTS

Korn Contest, 1955, Lane Van Hook, 154 Pearsall Drive, Mt. Vernon, N.Y., offers "a $100 cash prize for the best poem, to honor N. Y. State Poetry Day. Not over 32 lines, a subject selected by the author. Submit poem (one only) anonymously in triplicate. Deadline: Oct. 1, 1955.

University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, Kentucky, offers $5,000 Fellowship for book on the culture of Kentucky. Brochure. Deadline: April 1, 1955.

TRUE STORY, Al Rogliano. 205 E. 42nd St., NYC 17, offers for the 5th year $40,000 for true stories. $5,000 and 156 other cash contest prizes. Write for rules & study the stories published. Closes: April 20, 1955.

MODERN ROMANCES, Henry P. Malmgreen, Dell Publishing Co., 261 5th Ave., NYC 16, has an incentive system contest for Confession stories. Runs all year with pay-offs the end of April, Aug. & Dec., according to points run up. $7,000 in addition to regular sales. Be sure to write for rules and study the book!

Church Photography Contest, Public Relat. Div. 281 4th Ave., NYC 10, offers $100, $75, $25, & ten sets of books to camera fans who are Episcopalians and (1) professionals and (2) non-professionals, who earn less than ½ of their income from photography. Pictures taken within a year on "some aspect of this Church's work and life, as well as for photographic excellence." Closes: Apr. 30, 1955.

The ARCHER, Wilfred H. Brown, Box 3857 Victory Center Sta., No. Hollywood, Cal., offers $5 and merchandise for "Great American Leaders" poems not over 16 lines. (Other prizes, in other contests, some of which are on exchange basis with AM. BARD, 9141 Cimarron., Los Angeles 44, Cal.) Closes: Apr. 15, 1955.

Annual Swallow Poetry Book Award, Alan Swallow, 2679 So. York St., Denver 10, Colo, offers $250 ($50 advance on royalties). (No restriction, except juveniles not accepted. Poets who have not published books are urged to try the New Poetry Series Award first, which closes Jan. 1st annually.) Closes: Oct. 1st annually.

Child Security, Inc., 1836 Cimarron St.., Los Angeles 19, Cal., offers $3,000 for the best "standard textbook on the subject of & about Psycho Genesis, which can be supplied to teachers and students in groups. Closes: August 1, 1955."

Hospitalized Veterans' Writing Project, Mrs. Elizabeth Fontaine, Empire State Bldg., NYC 1, offers veterans and 172 VA hospitals, in its 9th annual contest $2,000 in cash prizes and $2,000 in merchandize. Under Section 16, Rehabilitation through Writing, the Remington Rand Corp. is awarding typewriters, The Grolier Society an "Encyclopaedia Americana," and REWRITE, a year's subscription.

The READER'S DIGEST, Pleasantville, N. Y., announced in its February issue an extraordinary competition for unusual personal experiences that may be either "Dramatic, Humorous or Inspiring." Payment for each one, if accepted, is $2,500, the length not over 1,200 words, or less. A published example is cited in the February issue. The competition "may be terminated June 1st."

Grange Conservation Contest, 744 Jackson Pl., N.W., Washington 6, D.C., offers $5,000, in national and state awards to students under 21 years for 800-word essays on the subject, "Gaining Ground With Fertility." Address as above or consult local Grange Lecturer, Vo-Ag teacher. Closes: March 31, 1955.

Springfield Verse-writers' Guild, Dorothea M. Hinds, RFD 5, Box 250, Springfield, Ill., offers $20 for the best poem; $5 for the best light verse. Unpublished, unrhymed poems under 20 lines. One entry only. Submit anonymously. Poet retains all rights. Closes: Mar. 31, 1955. (This has been an annual contest, for several years.)

Authors & Artists Club, 554 S. Crest Rd., Chattanooga, Tenn., offers $15, $10, $5 for original verse under 32 lines. Closes: Apr. 1, 1955.

Note on Contests and Fillers. There are many routine contests and regular featured, departmental contests, often dismissed as a filler by editors. Particularly in the home service magazines you will find these carried on from month to month. They afford good practice and a pot-boiling means of earning a little money. They are also a means for a beginning writer to get started and to discover the art of journalistic writing and of writing sharply for a special purpose. Main thing is to use and not be used for publicity.

A NEW REGIONAL MAGAZINE

DOWN EAST, Duane Doolittle, Camden, Me.., a new regional magazine that only began publication last July, is sidestepping poetry. "So far, we have used about one poem in each issue, so you can tell our interest is very slight. On the other hand, we very much want anecdotes, profiles, articles on activities and lore, and even short stories. Also, we use one or two photo stories in each issue. For anecdotes, we pay a standard $5, but for most features we pay from $30 to $50."

NEED FOR VIGOROUS ACTION!

Recently, we checked item by item advs. in a writers' magazine. It was appalling to observe the complete irresponsibility on this publisher's part in adequately checking the competence, truthfulness, and financial (and professional!) background of those advertising in his paper. Based upon detailed knowledge of practical writing and selling conditions and 25 years' experience, I wouldn't risk my money or reputation on any of them! Writers should demand responsibility!

WCS PERSONALITIES IN THE NEWS

Carol James is doing a historical feature series, "Grandma Lamb's Scrapbook," for the Cornwall Local in Edgewater, N. J. This is the kind of local feature that has started a great many inexperienced writers off. More experienced writers also have been known to use it as a copyright-protected notebook in which they can try out and work up or merely file ideas they can use later.

Alice Morse has also got herself a job as feature writer and special reporter, on the valley paper that covers Chatsworth and the surrounding area in California.

Mrs. Edith F. Osteyee sent us late in December the sad news that she has been forced to relinquish ownership and directorship of the Christian Authors' Guild. This fine school of religious writing was established by Mrs. Osteyee in March, 1949. A number of WCS Family members are also members of Mrs. Osteyee's CAG Family. I am sure all of them and the rest of us wish her good health and continued happiness in God's good work.

University Microfilms, 313 No. First St., Ann Arbor, Mich., has microfilmed REWRITE. I am happy to report, for the past 5 years. It is a privilege we appreciate annually, when our royalty check is received in December.. Readers and subscribers, particularly those public libraries using REWRITE and other microfilmed magazines, are urged to make full use of this space-saving "edition".

Helen Fletcher Collins, Arizona Daily SUN, Flagstaff, Ari., who uses a quatrain to fill "The Hole in Helen's Head" (the top of paper's women's page) in each issue, reprints, periodically, these light verses, and sells the anthology at 25¢. (See: P. 18. late tip.)

Mrs. Margaret Schulz, 7714 Fairfield Rd., N., Minneapolis 12, Minn., is one of the busiest women we know. Working on her 4th book about plants; has just become editor of the Hemerocallis Society Journal, lectures, has done a couple of TV series, & is a director of Am. Horticultural Council. (Note: glance at the Batting Average column, too.)

REWRITE'S circulation for 1954 was larger by more than 100 subscriptions. The drop-out ratio is unusually small, and the number of subscribers who renew for two or more years surprisingly high. We certainly are grateful for these expressions of confidence.

Celia M. Wright is another busy woman. An expert in making tax returns, she has written many features for the Hopkins County (in Texas) ECHO & Daily NEWS TELEGRAM (Sundays) for six years, and other nearby papers. She won the 1953 prize for the best article in a daily paper awarded by the Texas Women's Press Association.

Please tell us your news!

NEWS DIRECT FROM THE MARKET PLACE

An insight into editorial backgrounds was afforded writers when Doubleday & Co. raised three of its associate editors to senior editors. Jason Epstein came in after taking his M.A. at Columbia. He conceived and then developed the Anchor Book line.

Timothy Seldes and Francis K. Price began in the Doubleday Book Shops, then transferred to editorial work. They are veterans. It is part of the Doubleday & Co. policy plans that editors such as these have more or less complete charge of the books of a stable of authors. They work with the individual writers, present their books to the round table of editors for the final approval or rejection, then carry them through to publication and subsequent follow-through. Ideally, it personalizes the routine of a huge publishing house. Ken McCormick of course is editor-in-chief, LeBaron R. Barker executive editor, while Margaret Lesser and Isabelle S. Taylor have handled juveniles and the Crime Club for many years. Another top editor, Marjorie Piera, started as McCormick's private secretary.

WRITERS' FORUM announced its temporary suspension, promising to notify subscribers of resumption "when publication is resumed."

ELKS, 50 East 42nd St., NYC 17, sends out a rejection slip stating it works with free lance writers on an "assignment basis only," and therefore, does not buy unsolicited mss. It urges writers to watch writers' magazines for any change of policy.

TRAILER DIGEST, 171 Ivar Ave., Hollywood, 28, Cal., was reported to us (Dec. 3, 1954) to have been delayed 3 months. The editors sent instead a sample copy of SALESMAN'S DIGEST, a monthly (50¢). It wishes "competent & experienced salesmen to share their ideas & experiences."

How Publishers Lose Money! All writers in my opinion should look up and read carefully the clinical report on this subject (Nov. issue, Bookbinding & Book Production). The address: 50 Union Squ., NYC 3.

WGBH fm, Alice H. Bauer, Symphony Hall.., Boston 15, Mass., states "we cannot use program material from outside sources."

POETRY, Karl Shapiro, The Modern Poetry Association, 60 West Walton St., Chicago 10, Ill, will award in November, 1955, for the first time The Vachel and Elizabeth Lindsay Prize of $75. It is given by Mrs. E. Oscar Thalinger.

The Modern Poetry Association, which publishes POETRY, has been recognized by the U. S. Treasury Dep't. as a cultural project. So "all contributions to POETRY...are deductible for income tax purposes. All Members receive POETRY during their membership."

NEWS AND VIEWS IN THE MARKET PLACE

ST. JOSEPH, Rev. Albert Bauman, O.S.B., St. Benedict, Ore., quickly gave us a thumbnail biography of its new fiction editor who has replaced the late Mae Heggie. Early in December Fr. Bauman wrote:

"The new associate editor is to be Patricia Dayton, presently women's editor of the Santa Barbara NEWS-PRESS. She will join our magazine staff immediately after Christmas. She has been assistant Society & Club editor of the Los Angeles TIMES, Fashion Director for RKO Studios, editor of Fox Theatres' NOW, a chain magazine, and was in radio for a number of years. She is 46 years old."

The Editorial Directory, The Galub Publishing Co., Jack Galub, 516 5th Ave., NYC 36, is to have at once an editorial advisory board covering material especially for the public relations profession. This book which lists Canadian and American magazines, with their editorial personnel and vital statistics, is to have a companion volume covering newspapers (weekly & daily), syndicates and television, as well as radio & newsreel outlets.. The two books will probably be issued "at a package price of about $25." (This is not a cheaply edited writers' market list. It contains detailed information invaluable to serious professional writers seeking specialized staff contacts.

Torquil & Co, Davis Dresser, Greens Farms, Conn., is concentrating on its Michael Shayne books which are distributed by Dodd, Mead & Co. It is "not in a position to consider anything else."

ESQUIRE, Richard Margolis, promotion manager, 488 Madison Ave., NYC 22, sent us two sets of tear sheets about a story published in the January issue. It was by a young man working in ESQUIRE'S adv. dep't. The editor's comment traced how Arnold Benson, this author, sold his story and what happened until it appeared in print. Writers will benefit from studying this interoffice routine.

"As the editorial makes plain," states Mr. Margolis, "ESQUIRE is very much in the market for new, young talent." Writers take note!

The Christian Science MONITOR, YOUTH Section, 1 Norway St., Boston 15, Mass., is interested in "stories up to about 800 words, in its three columns, from readers in the 13 to about 35 bracket. Choose your own interesting subjects." The notice also suggests: "photographs and sketches, poems."

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 501 Madison Ave.., NYC 22, late in January started a new series of short biographies, "Great Lives in Brief." Selected from notable people in "any country time or field of endeavor, each book (about 60,000 words) tries to synthesize, authoritatively what is already known to the experts and satisfy the curiosity of average readers about the lives and accomplishments of famous people." It's intended to be adult reading prepared by well-known writers.

There are many new series of this variety constantly being developed by publishers, because if they fill a real need and catch on, they become "bread-and-butter" books stocked regularly by booksellers. They thus sell moderately over a long period of years. The publisher usually has lined up a sufficient number of authors for the first two or three years. (Knopf has already issued five books and scheduled an unspecified further number for the spring of this year.)

Nevertheless, smart competent writers observe such news in the book field and often profit by it. If they can prove they are an authority in a certain department, and have the ability to fill an assignment, it's possible to create a job for one's self.

"No Entries Will Be Returned." From time to time we receive communications about the injustice to writers done by this ruling in the filler and contest market. Generally, we try only to explain that editors dealing in large quantities of mail, consider it uneconomical to handle such items on a personal, or individual basis. And today economic considerations usually receive far more serious thought than human ones, even in this great democracy of ours.

However, Lillian Everts has sent us a note she has already published elsewhere. It has to do with the hazards and uncertainties an editorial policy of this kind lays over the poet like a dark cloud. For most editorial offices are conducted with propriety. Nevertheless, there can always arise that nagging little doubt that some one ms. wasn't destroyed, was just possibly mislaid or misappropriated in whole or in part. To that extent future publication and/or copyright is legally vitiated. And naturally as a consequence the peace of mind of the author, and the second editor are only as good as their confidence and trust in an unseen, anonymous and often ill-paid clerk.

If you think this is stretching the argument pretty thin, place yourself in the position of the second editor. Would you consider yourself sufficiently protected to face all legal contingencies? Remember that over a period of years the motion picture companies have regularly returned all mss. unread that are not properly vouched for by reputable agents. That little phrase, "No entries will be returned," could and may some day be the means of throwing an all mighty and unsuspected amount of chaos into the literary market place. It might just possibly lead to a fabulous damage suit, were an inconspicuous literary property unexpectedly to become valuable, and precipitate a tug of war by a brace of writers or just a couple of hungry editors!

Could be that a statement sworn to before a notary public may be required eventually.

"HOW FAR CAN YOU TRUST REJECTION SLIPS?"

One of our readers has asked the question whether "magazine editors have several different types of rejection slips—that is, encouraging words for 'promising' work, and a terse reply for 'trash'." I am glad to reply to that suggestion for an article. First, because it gives me an opportunity to explain that we welcome suggestions of that kind. If writers tell us what is puzzling them, what problems are bothering them, and what questions specifically they face, we can individualize the personal help we try to give and enable REWRITE to go far beyond the level of general platitudes. If all the members of the WCS Family think as a group, the results are more creative than if Elva and Bill do this digging up of new topics alone.

Second, it gives us a chance to talk over the whole matter of rejection slips. A good many writers think that an acceptance or rejection is largely a matter of luck. They do not realize that there is much that writers can do about them. For instance, it has always been our philosophy here at REWRITE and WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE that a tough policy of elimination of every possible "rejection factor", in other words, an aggressive offense rather than a weak defensive play, as the saying is in football, pays off repeatedly.

Bill's had a number of memorable anecdotes in a long career of working with professional writers in which he has helped a writer, who has received a rejection, to check over the rejection factors, revise and then send the ms. back and get an acceptance from the same editor who previously rejected it! In the case of several big slick editors these writers not only got an acceptance, but also a letter congratulating them on the fine revision, "the best I have seen in a really long time."

Now Bill does not take credit for a magical touch. Indeed, on the contrary the reason for this change of heart on the part of an editor has simply been that Bill and the writer have eliminated certain rejection factors that the writer should never have permitted to creep into his ms. in the original version. Moreover, the ms. had a quality at the time of the first reading which made editors want it. But doing their job well & keeping the requirements of their magazines uppermost in their minds, they saw that the ms. had to be rejected. They simply did not have the time, or did not dare to take a bet on the unknown fact of the personal reaction of the author, should they tell him "this ms. is good, but"—. But when a detached technician took the author aside and showed him the slips and weak spots the editor saw in this particular ms., and what to do about them, a rereading and speedy acceptance was quickly in order. Incidentally, Bill can cite a number of cases where such mss. were resubmitted against the advice of agents, but received the accolade of an enthusiastic editorial letter. The kind referred to above.

The point is, and this sad comment is in no way meant to be derogatory of editors or of agents, both agents and editors can usually spot a ms. that is not "right", but not always can they tell what to do about it. That is not their job. Their job is to build the magazine, to find the ideal place for a ms. Not to write it. Theirs is a different kind of creative effort. And good agents and editors are creative in the very best sense of the word. Wise professionals recognize this.

And so before getting back to our original question, I would like to state that definitely there is a place for the technically competent and creative critic, coach, or teacher who can help writers to satisfy editorial demands and specifications. And on the contrary, there is no place for those so-called "literary agents," who advertise in a few of the writers' magazines and pretend to be both agents and collaborating critics. We call them "critic-agents," and know, as every really professional writer who has tried one of them, and has found out the hard and expensive way, that they are good at neither of these professions. For both are professions, when rightly and diligently practiced.

The good and reputable agent sticks to his last. It requires all of his time to be actively in touch with editors and represents a comparatively small number of active writers. Similarly, the competent critic, (and you can count the number of these who are reputable and competent, on the fingers of one hand!) seldom or never pretend to be agents. They may originate a lot of sales for their clients through their creative experience with writing and selling. But like Bill and Elva, when their author friends need an agent, they quickly and gladly put them in contact with reliable agents, large or small, who do not advertise in writers' magazines. It is not a coincidence that the better writers' magazines do not accept this type of advertising. (The WRITER accepts no advs. from literary agents, and only one or two from correspondence schools. REWRITE accepts no advertising at all.)

Now let us return to the original problem. Yes, it is undeniably true that many publications do have different types of r.s. One distinguished literary magazine has on occasion had four (4) different grades of rejection slip, and you can appreciate the cynicism and disillusionment created in writers who have worked their way up this ladder and have discovered the lack of sincerity in the "go to hell" rejection slip enclosed with a returned bit of "trash"! Its kindness is bunk!

Those editors who do not have separate r. s., and are not so highly organized as this literary magazine, do have different ways of handling writers of "promising" material or mere "trash". On P.10 we have a note of comment from Helen Langworthy on the potential

significant implications of an "overstocked" rejection slip. In other words, the promising or well known author will get a letter; the working free lance will receive a r. s. with possibly an initialled word or two encouraging him and suggesting he try again; & the merely inexperienced writer will get the routine r. s., period. So, it's an evasion!

One factor that many writers do not think about seriously enough, is the condition of their ms. A dog-eared, faded ms., unprofessionally typed, does not place so much "urgency" on the editor to take pains with his r. s! On the other hand there are incorrigible editors, who mishandle the best looking ms. in the world.

BOOKS BY A WCS AUTHOR

THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF GLASTON. Eleanore M. Jewett. The Viking Press. $2.75. This isn't a new book, but is by a member of the WCS Family. Originally published in 1946, it's now run through four editions! It is a delightful mystery laid in medieval England, a period in which Eleanore specializes. Billy is enjoying the reading of his autographed copy very much.

MYSTERY OF THE MOONCUSSER. Eleanore M. Jewett. Scholastic Corp. $ .35. This time Eleanore is in a paper back edition, thanks to SCHOLASTIC Magazine and the Teen Age Book Club serving as distributor. A Cape Cod mystery, growing out of the ancient practice of salvaging wrecks on the Outer Shore.

(Note: there is a paper back edition also "The Hidden Treasure of Glaston". Mrs. Jewett has published a considerable number of titles in the junior novel field, as well as a few books of short stories. We are proud to have her in the WCS Family and as long time friend.)

Another Old Friend Is Selling, Too. Just as we went to press we came across a bit of humorous verse in TOWN JOURNAL by Helen Small. She has hit lots of the big slicks with her short, pungent light verse.

POETRY, The Modern Poetry Association, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago 10, Ill., is about to have a new editor. Karl Shapiro is teaching at Univ. of California. So, Henry Rago will serve as acting editor and Isabella Gardner as associate. Nicholas Joost, a former acting editor, is now teaching at the Catholic Assumption College in Worcester, Mass., where he originated a TV course on poetry. It is a neighbor of Clark University at which Bill is teaching.

A Frequent Question. We are often asked by inexperienced writers for the names of reliable agents. These writers feel that agents can save their time and help them to break-in. Regretfully, we have to tell them no agent except the advertising "critic-agents" whom we don't recommend, are interested in a small, unknown or irregularly selling writer.

DON'T BE A HASTY "JOINER"

There seems to be a special hazard facing poets. It is the danger of membership organizations that turn out to be not what their names imply. A friend of ours sent us a collection of "literature" supporting her invitation to join a very flashily aristocratic organization with a minimum of six words in its ornate and circumlocutory title. It all sounded like a dream come true. Our friend asked us to advise her whether it would appear profitable for her to join up.

Elva and I placed the whole batch of papers under our special non-rose-tinted microscope and went to work. Divorced from a corporate seal, an "R.S.V.P." and several misused and misquoted names, the proposition a poet was offered boiled down to this: a sizable annual membership fee; a chance to appear in an anthology, possibly win prizes & belong to an "exclusive" organization.

We regret to see the names of one or more moderately prominent poetry personalities & those on the fringe, who have been sucked in by such methods, used as "bait". We think less well of others who have supplied names of friends and, possibly, of club members to swell the results of this kind of membership drive campaign.

The way to success in writing, of any kind of writing, is the lonely one of writing and digging for markets or creditable magazines where publication may not bring pay, but is certain to afford recognition and prestige. Hard work, not back-patting and meaningless handles to your name, is what advances your career. It is what is inside of you, not the people you know or the organizations you may join, that lift you up above the crowd. Do not waste time, money, energy on the spurious labels upon which so many set their confidence and false inner security.

DON'T WRITE "ONE-CHARACTER" STORIES

A type of story that I see all too often, is the one-character variety. Perhaps a number of characters are mentioned and seem to take part in the plot. But actually, only one figure, the MC appears on the stage, in the living present before the reader. No matter how "dramatic" the plot of such stories is, the stories are not essentially dramatic. A story cannot be dramatic when there isn't a real conflict taking place in sight of your reader.

The trouble with these stories is that it is impossible to generate reader interest if the MC just sits and reflects about his situation. Introspection is always dull, tedious and depressing. It is a form of escape, a day-dream that removes one from reality. A beginning writer slips into using it because it is such an easy, unprofessional & technically undemanding way to tell a story. So, be smart, avoid it as you would the plague. Tell your story in terms of action!

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE (MORE)

Mabel I. Huggins
Poem: PROGRESSIVE FARMER (Dec.)
Article: NATURE (Jan.)

Frances Durland (More)
Story: CHRISTIAN HOME.

Julia Ann Cook
Poems: Washington STAR, The ARCHER.

"HOW FAR THAT LITTLE CANDLE"...!

In January the Christophers gave a monthly $100 prize to a 27-year old housewife in appreciation of her having been touched by a Christopher TV show which inspired her to—write a book of poems and share her thoughts with others. "Story Time in Rhyme", written for and about her children, contains 52 poems. It's homely, artless work that nonetheless carries her message and points up with humor the genuineness of her effort. We are glad Mrs. Cathy Baker Stamps persisted for18 months!

This little anecdote illustrates the power of the printed word when backed by human courage and the guiding hand of the Infinite. The B. A. Column proves it to. Look within!

It always gives Elva and me an extra-special satisfaction when the lives of a number WCS Family members touch. Marjorie McClellan Flint wrote about Mrs. Ingalls (below) in her column. Peggie Schulz and Muriel Caswell of the GLOMINIAN and Boston Sunday POST respectively used some of her writings. Nice!

A courageous and touching letter from Mrs Naomi M. Ingalls, beloved member of the WCS Family, who has been seriously ill, but has managed to keep on writing, and gardening!

Alice M. Huggins' book, "Day of the False Dragon" (Westminster), has now been given a Norwegian translation and is selling well in that country. She wrote it while under house arrest by the Communists near Tientsin, China.

Helen Fletcher Collins' column with its piquant "Hole in Helen's Head" (a space for a contributed quatrain, many of which members of the WCS Family supplied), has been "discontinued," according to Avonne D. Ballin. A note was received, she reported just before press time, from Helen, advising that she'd severed connections with the Arizona (daily) SUN. I have written for particulars.

I am sure we all agree with Avonne Ballin that "Mrs. Collins is one of those rare and helpful critics, with only the good of the poet in mind always. We will miss her." And hope she returns to editing soon!

Good Resolution! How often do you take pen in hand and tell an editor you like his, or her, work? That's a very salutary deed. For it helps the editor to gauge reader temper. And it helps writers get better reception.

PROBLEMS IN THE MARKET PLACE

Bill Vinton reported recently how he managed to extract a check from a magazine that published an article by him, but paid no attention to requests for payment. He used his records of mailing dates, carbons, letters, and especially letters from the magazine. A good tip this for writers on why you should always back up your ms. submissions to editors with all the supporting records & evidence you can.

Some writers put this material into a lawyer's hands when they experience trouble. I think a cheaper method is to call on Better Business Bureaus (there is a national one!) and the U. S. Postal Inspectors. Publishing a writer's copyrightable material without a suitable payment for it and without explanation in advance that no payment is made, is a variation of the use of the mails for the purposes of fraud. The postal inspectors in most instances will investigate and an editor or publisher can be barred from further use of the mails.

The magazine that Bill had trouble with is in the men's field. REWRITE has had repeated complaints regarding its slow reports. I have advised our clients to cross it off as a worthwhile market.

Beware All Songwriters! Bill who couldn't write a song if the alternative was to jump through a hoop in mid-air, received a third class postage circular incorrectly addressed (but with a postal #3547 form request requiring post office workers to forward necessary corrections or forwarding address.) A hearty invitation was extended to "Dear Songwriter" to submit songs for possible promotion. The address was merely a box-number, neatly keyed so the anonymous mailer could analyze the effectiveness of his advertising.

Songwriters (or any other kind of writers who take their writing seriously, and value their pocketbooks, should consign that kind of wholesale, low cost mail-order appeal to the wastebasket as quickly as possible! It's sucker-bait of the worst kind.

"Boiler Plate" Comes to Radio. The Division of Radio & Television of the Episcopal Church, 281 4th Ave., NYC 10, can now supply at a cost of $5 each, 52 half-hour noon-hour prayer services heard regularly from a Wall Street church. This represents a years supply of taped recordings for use by ministers and local radio stations all over the country. The Christophers (Catholic) have a lot of similar religious and inspirational programs. Industrial and publicity firms use a parallel type of material, often given free to anyone who can use it.

This is a praiseworthy program. But these taped programs fill time that would otherwise require writers to prepare it. Such material is similar to the newspaper syndicated & very cheap "boiler plate" editors use as "fill".

REWRITE

Cont'd from P. 11

problem must be stated; the relationships and emotions clearly defined. And the line of interest has to be worked out, & then made to move forward step by step. In a word, a story is created with enough narrative-drive to interest and hold the reader.

It is true I called for just one scene. But some of the authors broke this up by action, so that their scene had the appearance of several scenes. At least the main scene was punctuated with breaks and pauses. The reader was given rests between the dramatic high spots, and also between the "turns" in the plot.

It is a rule of thumb technically, that the more you make a piece of writing easy to follow, the better a reader enjoys it. And of course this is true for prose writing, features, as well as for fiction. In feature writing I always try to visualize the step-by-development of my subject so clearly that the reader will see it visually on the printed page right in front of his own eyes and with all of his mind and emotions.

A girl friend of mine used to say I made the things I described so vivid she could see & hear and feel everything as if she'd been with me. But that was only part of what I made her see. I used vivid, "seeing", and emotion-creating words, and action verbs. But I also made my line of interest so clear that she could follow every turn of my thought and feeling about a feature subject as I developed it.

The first sentence of each & every paragraph carried a reader forward in Time and Space & indicated clearly what new development would be introduced. Then, and only then, did I introduce it. In a different medium it is the same thing radio does when it tells a blind listener that a plate is going to be smashed, and then lets fall with a crash the plate. Readers can read confidently since they know what is happening.

Next Workshop. Make your own assignment! Write briefly what you wish. Send it in with a return, stamped envelop. I will discuss it. Deadline: May 10

On Copyrights

So involved are the copyright laws, and particularly in the instance of poetry, that it would be a rash person who would set himself up as an authority in this field. There are a few specialists, colloquially known as "copyright lawyers," whose opinions can be respected but even they are not always in agreement. One of the difficulties concerning poetry and copyrights is that, because of the small sums which poetry brings on the market, no one could profitably enter a damage suit if his copyright was infringed. Yet court action, if necessary to the highest tribunal, can only provide the final dictum in the matter.

In the first place, as we understand the operations of the Bureau of Copyrights whose address is the Library of Congress, Washington 25, D. C., no work can be copyrighted until it is printed. The isolated poem, then, must appear somewhere in print. And normally this is in a magazine. If the magazine copyrights its contents—when it does the magazine becomes the copyright owner—then the work is protected. It cannot legitimately be published elsewhere without the consent of the copyright owner.

There, however, are a considerable number of poetry-publishing journals which do not copyright contents. What is important to know in this circumstance is that once a work is published, unprotected by copyright, it is put in the public domain. Once a poem appears *in the public domain* it can be used *ad lib* by anyone who chooses to do so without any reference either to poet or magazine. If that particular poem were later to be used by the author in a collection of his work, in a book which *is* copyrighted, still its prior appearance uncopyrighted leaves it unprotected. That poem could appear twice, thrice, a half dozen times in copyrighted publications, but protection of copyright after the first uncopyrighted publication is no protection at all.

Possibly there are poets who do not care if their poems are "lifted" so long as they acquire more readers for it. Yet should they propose a book collection of their work, the reputable publisher will wish the book's contents protected by copyright and will go through the tedious work of obtaining the necessary copyright releases from magazine-holders of the copyright. And some publishers will fight shy of bringing out such a collection the majority of whose poems are in the public domain.

We have often been surprised to see how very many little magazines leave their work unprotected by not applying for copyrights. And even more so when book after book comes off the presses of the vanity publishers without being copyrighted either by the publisher or the author. The copyright fees are extremely reasonable; the process of obtaining copyright are comparatively simple—the Library of Congress will furnish information on request.

LAST MINUTE NEWS

YANKEE, Robb Sagendorf, Dublin, N. H., New England regional magazine, has been using one short story in each issue fora number of months.

It also offers 3 cash prizes, awards for recipes.

It uses several well illustrated features, some of which are written by staff or on arrangement.

CONNECTICUT LITERARY REVIEW, John De Stefano, 1228 Meriden Rd, Waterbury, Conn. The first issue was scheduled to appear on March 21. Contents sounded interesting. $1 per copy. Quarterly.

The center box is reprinted, from the Catholic Poetry Society of America Bulletin. It is good talk on the matter of the copyrighting of poems. The Society in its magazine, SPIRIT, uses no poems it cannot properly copyright under its blanket house copyright.

It requires of all who use a poem from its pages, that they make a correct, specific statement that it is copyrighted by C. P.S.A., with the date. That is as it should be. Many magazines in the little field do not copy this excellent example.

AMERICAN POETRY LEAGUE, Margie Boswell, membership chairman, 1616 W. Terrell St., Fort Worth 4, Texas, issued a readable Bulletin in Feb. The Club holds an annual contest for the members. Many prizes. Closes: June 30, 1955.

Join now. Many WCS Familites are active in the League.

Winona Strachan tells us she has sold her first 100,000 words of teen age fiction. Elva and I are happy at her success and glad that we encouraged her to venture into the serial field.

Postal Legislation. Proposed postage rate increases will hurt writers and the magazines they write for. They will not lessen the Post Office Dept. deficit because they are already earmarked to cover pay-raises for postal workers in a pre-election year! The Democrats worked this same bogus thrift plan on abused taxpayers!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF TONE?

Few writers among the less experienced, I would judge from detailed examination of innumerable mss., pay much attention to tone. They don't set the mood of their stories in a sharp, clean-cut manner. That is one form of technical excellence that most professional authors usually do well.

Perhaps you do not know what I mean or am referring to. It is the quality or effect a story registers sharply and with impact upon a reader. In the case of a good story an editor knows almost instantly whether it is a love story, a realistic or slice-of-life, a satirical, deadpan or tongue-in-cheek, or a heavy-handed belly laugh sort of story. I know that nothing worries an editor so much as a story he cannot classify or file neatly in his mind as such-and-such a type story.

John P. Marquand, in his latest collection of literary papers and short stories, has a word to say on this aspect of merchandising a story. "The truth is," he comments rather ruefully concerning one of his experimental stories, "that satire is not a popular commodity with most Americans..." And he adds wryly, "But then ideas, if any, should appear in fiction only through the utmost indirection."

Parenthetically, one may say that Mr. Marquand, who of course sold the commercial editors in the slick field for many years before he gradually turned to the longer novel, is pretty disillusioned about the capacity of most slick editors to absorb ideas. I do not disagree with him, but I feel that his own ideas, at least about the subject of slick fiction, can be easily misinterpreted. Standards and judgments change from year to year. And differences show up when individual editors are given a free rein. Moreover, particular stories and some authors on occasion give the lie to any generalized or fixed rules.

And even more important, few stories nowadays fail to be built around some truth or theme or problem, however commonplace, obvious and threadbare it may seem to some of us in the business. The ideas may not be deep, or satisfying, but they are there for simple minds that are often shaped and activated by them. I wish as much as anyone that popular fiction would combine more stimulation with mere entertainment. (I believe that is perhaps the primary reason for its decline and decrease in space.) But as one who helps authors to sell their wares and to write better stories, I am thankful that fiction for the big markets contains any ideas at all. I believe, too, the degree of thickening in the soup depends a good deal upon (1) the imaginativeness of the cook, and (2) the ability and patience of the latter in working ideas and creative art into her use of whatever materials she uses. A great deal of the current fiction is very obviously fabricated by writers who have one eye on the cash-register, and take no longer than necessary to write a slight, competent piece. Or who have come up the hard way through the rough school of experience. They have learned how to write, but have given no serious thought as Mr. Marquand has, about why they write or to what purpose.

Another factor that undeniably affects and shapes the quality and texture of fiction at any point in history is the spirit of those times in which writers write. Today, whether they like it or not, all writers are forced to write against a backdrop of violence and uncertainty as well as insecurity that is both material and spiritual in its nature. The material instability and insecurity writers face, is always with us. But in the midst of the national and racial hatreds our leaders are constantly stirring up, and the psychosis of fear that certain demagogues create, to attract attention to themselves, and for the advancement of their own personal interests, who can be absolutely sure that his ideas and ideals are everlastingly true. It takes a courageous man today not to equivocate and use weasel words.

Moreover, there is more sharply etched the eternal struggle between the old and the new, the conservative and the radical. Young men who have lived in the fox-holes of Korea, & World War II have done a lot of thinking about the folly that man keeps perpetrating, generation after generation, century upon century. Many of them seek to do something realistic and practical about it. But they're confused by the lassitude and cynical inertia of the folks back home. And over all is the retreat back into the age of barbarity, which is exemplified by the dictator world, on the one hand, and our own willingness to allow crime and violence and the crookedness of a few politicians, to lead us by the nose.

But over and above all else there emerges the universal and eternal truth that "tone" in story stands for more than a mere aesthetic characteristic. Those who want to write effective fiction must give their stories the crystal clarity of thought and form that alone creates impact in the reader. An author who would be remembered, must have something mature to say, and say it quickly and with emotional conviction. There is one thing readers will not tolerate. That is fiction, which in any sense seems flabby and "wishy-washy". Many readers in all types of writing read to kill time. But they don't want writers to do it in setting up the materials of "Escape".

That is the single reason why fiction appears to languish at the present time. Because it does not say anything worth listening to, and reads as if it were written in a hurry. The authors don't care enough. So it cannot compete with real life. But real life non-fiction is becoming more fictional--all the time. When story-tellers get down to business, there'll be a surge back to fiction.